



NEWS RELEASE

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40 CHARGED WITH VIOLENT CRIMES

State and federal charges are part of Violent Crime Impact Team roundup

COLUMBUS – Ten teams totaling almost 100 Columbus Police officers, agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Deputy U.S. Marshals, and officers of the Ohio Adult Parole Authority today began arresting 36 people named in eleven federal indictments and four others wanted on state charges. The individuals are charged with firearm and drug crimes. Some of the charges carry a potential term of life imprisonment.

Gregory G. Lockhart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio; Christopher P. Sadowski, Special Agent in Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Columbus Police Chief James G. Jackson; Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections Director Terry Collins; and Franklin County Prosecuting Attorney Ron O'Brien announced the arrests today.

The charges are the result of an 18-month investigation by Columbus Police, investigators with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections and Ohio Adult Parole Authority, and ATF agents into drug and violent crimes in west Columbus neighborhoods. A table listing those charged is attached.

The investigation is part of an ongoing effort to reduce crimes in targeted neighborhoods by employing Violent Crime Impact Teams (VCIT) of federal, state and local law enforcement officers. The goal of the teams is to arrest the most violent offenders in the targeted area.

Twenty-three individuals are charged with conspiracy to distribute more than 50 grams of crack cocaine, a crime punishable by at least ten years and up to life imprisonment. The 11 indictments contain 105 total counts alleging that the defendants committed crimes including possession of a firearm by a felon, which is punishable by up to 10 years, heroin, cocaine and crack cocaine trafficking each punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment, and use of a firearm in a drug-trafficking crime which is punishable by five years consecutive to any other time served.

The U.S. Attorney's Office will seek detention without bond for 29 of those charged. Hearings will be conducted in federal court today and tomorrow.

"The combination of drugs and guns invites violence into communities," Lockhart said. "This unified action sends a strong message that violent crime is not welcome here."

"ATF and Columbus Police are focused on the criminals that threaten this community with drug dealing and firearms violence," Sadowski said. "We are giving notice today to drug dealing, firearm wielding criminals – we are targeting you and you will be brought to justice. The Violent Crime Impact Team of ATF, CPD and our law enforcement partners is committed to removing violent criminals from this community."

Nine members of the U.S. Marshals Service Southern Ohio Fugitive Apprehension Team (SOFAST) participated in the arrests and coordinated transportation of the defendants.

ATF launched the VCIT initiative in June 2004. These teams use innovative technology, analytical investigative resources and an integrated federal, state and local law enforcement strategy to identify, disrupt, arrest and prosecute the most violent criminals. Teams now exist in 30 cities nationwide, including Columbus.

The Columbus VCIT effort began in June, 2004 with a focus on removing violent criminals from the streets. Teams of law enforcement officers, federal and state prosecutors meet regularly to review cases involving firearms. Decisions are made jointly on whether to prosecute a criminal through the state or federal system, depending on the evidence and on which system could provide the harsher punishment.

An indictment is merely an accusation. All defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty in court.

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